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PAUL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

When the apostle Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, he made a stop at Miletus and called for the Ephesian elders to meet him there. He said to them:

"You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus."

"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the

Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace."

"Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears."

"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

It is difficult to say goodbye, especially when you have to say it to people who mean a lot to you. We know that Paul was with the church in Ephesus for over three years, and so we understand his closeness to the faithful men serving as overseers there. His situation was made all that much harder by knowing that persecution was waiting for him in Jerusalem, and that he would not see these brethren nor any of the others from Ephesus again. Hopefully that is not the case for Jessica & myself! Obviously no one knows what the future may hold or where we may end up ("Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." Prov. 27:1), but I would love to see you all again in this life. Whether that means us coming back to visit you, or seeing you somewhere else, my hope is that this parting is not final.

When you look at Paul's words as he was ready to never see the Ephesian elders again, you can tell he wanted to leave on a good note, but did not want to just dwell on pleasantries. He reminds them of his love for them and his earnest service in preaching the gospel, but then quickly switches gears to warn them about false teachers and the danger they will pose to the Church. Expressing our love and sharing fond memories is all well and good, but Paul would not have been a good friend and brother if he had neglected to exhort them to take a strong stand for the truth!

Knowing that there are so many here that are knowledgeable of God's Word, ready to teach, and not afraid to deal with hardships is a comfort to me. Chuck and Harold have proven themselves again and again to be faithfully serving as pastors here, taking good care of this flock, and so I am not worried about what may come down the road. I hope that persecutions, divisions, and false teaching do not harm this congregation in the days ahead, but even should they, I trust in the members here to put the Lord and His Word first.

Like Paul, I want to offer some words of encouragement and exhortation. I said that I trust you, brethren, to do what is right, and I meant it, but that does not mean that

I feel it is unnecessary to urge you, from the Scriptures, to "keep on keeping on."

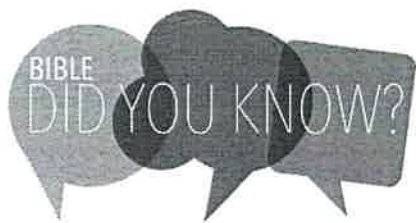
"We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thess. 5:12-18)

There is always room for improvement, always something we do (even if we do it pretty well) that we can be doing better or more often, and most of the time all we have to do is figure out what that is. Ask yourself: do I know anyone who is idle? Do not wait for someone else to admonish them; give them the warning they need to hear! Do you know a brother or sister who is fainthearted? Consider how you can brighten their day and let them know that others care for them! No matter who you are, there are things you can do to grow this local church, either in

number or in strength.

If the elders continue leading with wisdom and humility, and the members continue to submit to them and work heartily for the Lord, good things will come for the saints here at Wellsburg. Life will never be a rose garden, but we need to have faith that God will supply our every need if we put Him first! Your lights shining in this community is pleasing to the Father! Do not forget that!

- Jarred Currence



The Bible was written over a 1600 year period by approximately 40 men. The time of the writing was from 1500 BC to AD 100.

The longest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119 with 176 verses. The shortest chapter is Psalm 117 with only 2 verses. Incidentally, the middle chapter of the Bible is also Psalm 117.

People, Places, and Things of the **BIBLE**



WHERE DID THE PHILISTINES COME FROM?

The excavations at Tell es-Safi/Gath, the site of Gath of the Philistines mentioned in the Bible (e.g., 1 Samuel 6:17), have produced many fascinating finds, and the summer of 2011 was no exception.

While uncovering an impressive destruction level dating to the second half of the ninth century B.C.E., when Gath was the largest of the five cities of the Philistines and perhaps the largest city in the Land of Israel during the Iron Age, excavators found an exceptionally well preserved horned altar reminiscent of the Israelite horned altars described in the Bible (Exodus 27:1–2; 1 Kings 1:50).

Had it not been for a stroke of luck, the horned altar may never have been discovered. Like most archaeological digs, the Tell es-Safi/Gath excavation leaves unexcavated “balks” between the excavation squares, thereby allowing easier access to the squares as well as providing a profile view of the excavated layers. In the winter of 2010/2011, however, strong rainstorms caused some of the balks to collapse.

When the team came back to the field in July 2011, one of their first priorities was to clean up and straighten the collapsed balks. As they cleaned one of the balks in Area D (in the lower city), they came upon an unusually shaped stone object just 10 inches below the surface. Work was immediately stopped as they probed further, and, lo and behold, one of the horns of the altar appeared. Once they realized what they had discovered, the team began the slow, delicate process of excavating the entire horned altar.

The horned altar stands nearly 3.5 feet high and measures just over 1.5 feet on each side. These dimensions more or less match the dimensions given in the Bible (Exodus 30:2) for the Israelite incense altar of the Tabernacle (though this altar shows no signs of having been used to burn incense). Moreover, the decorative features of the altar, including its horns and the groove and raised band of the base, are similar to Israelite altars described in the Bible (Exodus 27:2), as well as other Iron Age altars that have been found throughout the southern Levant.

But why does this altar have only two horns, when we know from the Bible and excavated examples that the altars of both the Israelites and, later, the Philistines, typically had four horns?

The fact that the Tell es-Safi/Gath horned altar has only two horns may have to do with the cultural origins of the Philistines. As Louise Hitchcock, senior staff member of the Tell es-Safi/Gath excavations, has suggested, the very motif of the horned altar in the Levant may have been influenced by earlier Minoan “horns of consecration,” symbolic representations of the horns of the sacred bull in Minoan culture. In fact, there is an altar from the Late Bronze Age site of Myrtous Pigadhes in Cyprus that also has only two horns. The unique horned altar from Tell es-Safi/Gath, the earliest stone altar ever found from the land of the Philistines, may be another indication of the Aegean influences on early Philistine culture and quite possibly a hint to their origins.



This nearly 4-foot-tall, two-horned altar from the site of Tell es-Safi (Gath of the Philistines) suggests the origins of the Philistines are to be sought in the Aegean world.